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A. J. Casson honored

Times change says 'Group' member

TORONTO — (CP) — A. J. Casson, the last living member of the Group of Seven, was recently awarded an honorary degree at the University of Toronto.

The artist, who began painting in 1920, was invited to join the distinguished group in 1925. But at that time, they were considered neither distinguished nor a group.

Canadian reaction to the artists' paintings resembled that of the Paris critics and public to the Impressionists' work in the late 1800s.It was mainly disgust and anger.

The Group of Seven were unique at that point. Casson recalled, because they painted art with Canadian eyes, not European. He dismissed early Canadian art:

"Around 1912, and for many years after, a large percentage of works shown in any given exhibition were by so-called Sunday painters. The demand for Canadian works was so limited that most artists earned their living by doing commercial work or teaching."

CHANGE VIEWPOINT

He said the group came together in an effort to change the viewpoint of Canadian painting. They held an exhibition at the newly opened Art Gallery of Toronto in 1920. They adopted the name of Group of Seven because they didn't want to be known as just another art society.

A. J. CASSON

Casson said that the exhibit as provoked the critics that "blandness went out the window."

He said the critics and public could not fathom a real art movement inspired by Canada.

"Painters and their works were attacked from all sides. The paintings were compared in the press with a Hungarian goulash, a drunkard's stomach, head cheese,and they said that the group had fooled the rest of Canadian art."

This criticism angered the artists at first, Casson said, but it also furnished publicity for a previously apathetic public. Soon the outcry changed into compliments and praise.

HAD NO LEADER

The artist stressed that the Group of Seven organization has been constantly misinterpreted. He said the group had no leader, no secretary, no regular meetings and no jury. They held together for friendship and common objectives.

"The grap existed for two purposes — to paint Canada as Canadians and to let in a breath of fresh air."

Over the years, the artists sketched and camped in every part of Canada, said Casson. For example, two of the artists, Lawren Harris and A. Y. Jackson, made their campsite on the north shore of Lake Superior, a complete wilderness at that time. They made some of their best sketches there.

He said the group named fakes they liked after favorable critics and the enarshly. desirable fakes after critics they disliked. The names were never written publicly.

In 1932, the group decided to disband due to some illnesses and members leaving Toronto.

Casson said: "I remember that last meeting very well, it was there that the group decided that it had accomplished its main objectives.

"The group had helped to free Canadian artists from the shackles of worn-out conventions."

Casson currently works with police tracking down fraudulent group works.

"Back in the group days, anyone who spent time faking group paintings would have been wasting his time," he said. There was no market for them and prices were at rock bottom. How things have changed."

Pianist McCoy Tyner opened a week's stay at In Concert last night.

Tyner's piano musings key to 'universal' sound

By JUAN RODRIGUEZ of The Gazette

McCoy Tyner, who opened a weeklong stint at the In Concert Club last night, is without doubt one of the most creative pianists on the contemporary jazz scene.

Unlike such players as Cecil Taylor and Keith Jarrett, he forsakes the piano as a solo instrument, instead using it to keynote a torrent of sound from his quintet.

Tyner's rolls and waves are dense and often strident, but they project a meditative mood that intensifies with concentrated listening.

Don't expect the relaxed riff or stock phrase from Tyner, because he's more concerned with exploring a more universal sound.

Tyner first attracted worldwide fame with his six-year stint with the late saxophonist John Coltrane. Not only was this a learning experience for Tyner, but their interrelations provided a standard of communication between musicians that was one of the major influences of improvisational playing during the 1960s.

During the current decade, the 36-year old Tyner's ideas have blossomed to the point where he is a moving musical force on his own.

Although electronic keyboardists are the vogue today, spawning countless plugged-in imitators, Tyner's acoustic piano provides a more singular listening experience.

INTENSE

He pounds out an intense accumulation of sounds, his left hand striking out chords authoritatively, his right hand pecking quick, clear clusters of notes. The combination, held in a trance-like and indefatigable control by the pianist, provides constant counterpoint. Tyner handles the relationship between his two part attack with a "know-ingness" that lends itself to absorbing listening.

Tyner's percussive approach to the group sound is both reminiscent of traditional African forms as well as twentieth century progressive music.

The pianist's spiritual approach has been a major influence over his saxophone player, Azar Lawrence, who is faced with the task of knowing the Coltrane territory without sounding like a copycat. His soprano sound cuts through cleanly. His stream of notes both controlled and darting.

Lawrence is clearly searching for his own style while remaining faithful to Tyner's themes, and this search within such a context adds extra excitement to the group.

The rest of the quintet is pure rhythm and percussion, from the nimble bass lines of Jamie Booth, the stormy drums and clanging cymbals of Wayne Wright, and the exotic and wide variety of percussions of Guillermo Franco.

Their combined attack is fierce and produces uncompromising explosions that transport the listener further and deeper into the realm of a universal sound.

Pop giants gather for summit sessions

By MARY CAMPBELL

NEW YORK —(AP)— The Concert, the two-week summit sessions of three deans of popular music — Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald and Count Basie — opened last night at Broadway's Uris Theatre.

Miss Fitzgerald was great. Sinatra, as soon as he warmed up and began to seem at home on stage, was better than his "comeback from retirement" last year.

Tickets, priced from $40 to $15, were sold out for most performances in the almost 2,000-seat theatre. A few seats are left for midnight shows on Fridays and Saturdays. The engagement ends Sept. 20 to be followed by one-night stands in Philadelphia, Cleveland and Chicago.

Sinatra, in his usual break for a monologue and drink of "tea with honey" from a coffee cup, said, "I remember at the old Paramount Theater, people saying, Forty cents! For what? Some skinny kid in a jacket without lapels."

The evening began with three crisp numbers by the Basie Band. Then Miss Fitzgerald walked on and pounced on Too Close for Comfort, tearing it apart with vocal excitement. She followed that with Duke Ellington's Do Nothing Till You Hear from Me, making it a slow, thoughtful ballad. She broke it up again with a wildly uptempo Sweet Georgia Brown, sang a medley from Broadway's The Wiz and ended with old-time blues mastery on Ain't Nobody's Business if I Do.

SEEMED TENSE

Sinatra came on after the intermission. At first, he didn't seem quite comfortable and the little chat from professionalism to star quality didn't come quickly.

He got into it with his fourth song, a rousing My Kind of Town, but seemed to tense up again as he followed that with a series of love songs, clipping some of the phrases unexpectedly short.

But with Nice and Easy he hit the stride a Sinatra fan would wish and stayed there. From then on, he sounded relaxed and mellow, his voice in and out of the low register. Pennies from Heaven was vigorous; Send in the Clowns set a poignant mood and the audience demanded a reprise of his I've Got You Under my Skin.

The evening ended with a few mellow duets by Sinatra, 59, and Miss Fitzgerald, 57, in one of which he sang "The Lady Is a Tramp. They bowed to a standing ovation in which they were joined by the 71-year-old Basie.

Rooney set for no. 8

HONG KONG — (UPI) — Actor Mickey Rooney said yesterday he has "found the girl of my dreams" and will make her his eighth wife later this year.

Rooney, in Hong Kong to begin work on a new film, said his bride-to-be is Jan Chamberlain, a 25-year-old American singer-composer.

"At long last I've found the girl of my dreams," Rooney said as he relaxed in his hotel suite with Miss Chamberlain. "I've got a bad case of the flu, but love can conquer anything." Rooney will be 53 on Sept. 23.

"I don't believe in marriage myself because it wrecks a good relationship between people who truly love each other," said Miss Chamberlain.

"But Mickey believes so much in the institution of marriage — and I can't disappoint him."

Rooney, who lives near Fort Lauderdale, Fla., said he and the blonde Miss Chamberlain would be married in the United States.

"Poor Mickey," said Miss Chamberlain. "All his previous wives didn't understand him. I'll be different for him. Understanding is so important."

Reward set for films

ROME — (Reuter) — The producers of three films stolen from a processing plant last month, including one by Federico Fellini, have offered a reward of $42,000 for information leading to their return.

The films are Fellini's still-uncompleted work Casanova, Pier Paolo Pasolini's Salo or The 120 Days of Sodom, and Damiano Damiani's Gemini.

Alberto Grimaldi, who financed the Fellini and Pasolini films, said recovery of the 74 cans of stolen negatives was not essential as reasonably good copies had been made from existing positive prints.

Jaws bites record

LOS ANGELES — (Dow Jones) — MCA Inc. said that its movie Jaws has become the most successful motion picture in the U.S. and Canada in the history of the movie business.

In 80 days Jaws has reaped a bot office gross of $124.3 million in slightly less than 1,000 theatres in the U.S. and Canada.

MCA said Jaws has surpassed the previous record holder, The Godfather.

The company said it plans to release the film overseas in December.

Takes over Cinema Canada

Cinema Quebec enlarges empire

By JACK KAPICA of The Gazette

With this month's issues, both of Canada's national movie magazines, Cinema Canada and Cinema Quebec, will be published from Montreal under the editorship of the Cinema Quebec staff.

Cinema Canada has been published for three years in Toronto as a charitable venture by the Cinema Canada Magazine Foundation.

In debt for $10,000, Cinema Canada's editors have turned over the magazine to the Montreal husband-wife team of Jean-Pierre and Cerise Tadros, whose Cinema Quebec has been published for five years.

Cinema Quebec is breaking even financially, said Cerise Tadros, the new co-editor of Cinema Canada.

"We're bringing the operation of Cinema Canada to Montreal, but purely for administrative reasons," she added. "We shall maintain an office in Toronto with most of the original staff."

She said no changes were planned in the editorial policy of either magazine.

Cinema Canada, which has been plagued with financial difficulties, incorporated itself into a charitable foundation to get easier tax-free money.

Should the magazine ever make money, its profits will go to the Canadian film industry or whatever is deemed appropriate by the Cinema Canada Magazine Foundation, said Tadros. Jean Pierre Tadros is vice-president of the foundation, and Cerise is secretary-treasurer.

The president of Cinema Canada Magazine Foundation is George Keller, former editor of the magazine.

"There is no competition between the two magazines," said Tadros. "The French one gives more background to the industry in the provinces, but the English one gives more news.

"English newspapers don't follow the cinema industry at all, and the magazine must continue as a news organ.

"The aim of both is to further an authentic national cinema in both the English and French sectors. Two magazines are needed because the values between those sectors are so different," she said.

Although the September issue of Cinema Canada remains at a news-stand price of $1.25, it will be brought down to $1 to match Cinema Quebec with the next issue.

Current issues of Cinema Quebec and Cinema Canada. Both magazines are now headquartered in Montreal.

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